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MAIL BLOG
18 JAN 2025
C.C.

No one in this room has hands. They barely have arms, and rarely a nose, if even a head at all. The security guard, with all of those things, hit my face. They were gesturing wildly at their colleagues who monitor the ruined sculptures left behind after dozens out of a thousand other artifacts were seized for having been suspiciously acquired.

I sang I Want To Hold Your Hand quietly into the acoustics of the galleries filled with ancient funerary objects decorated with hands holding hands. January eighteenth is the date marked as the start of the British Invasion six decades ago, when that song entered the American charts. It is also the birthday of my Beatle-loving friend Pete, who also came to America and records his songs using the same multitrack technology that was groundbreaking for I Want To Hold Your Hand.

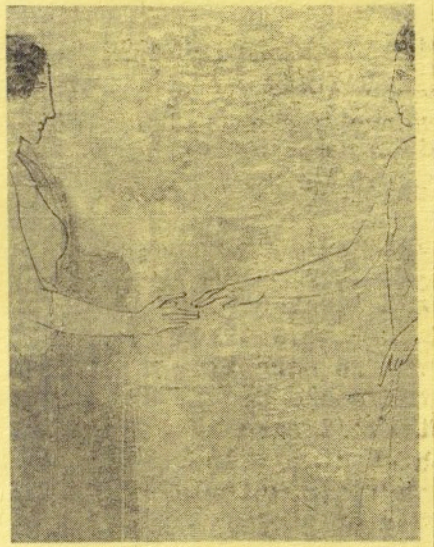
There are a lot of touching tributes for the dead, now estranged from their monuments. This human longing for physical contact with lost love is sorrowful amongst the vengeful (battle), agreeable (business), and lustful (love) hand-to-hand depictions on urns and tombs.

I took pictures of the tiny hands gripping grapes and baskets on the sides of an ornate marble sarcophagus carved in such fine detail that I could see fingernails. A stranger asked why her bathtub didn't look like this, and her companion didn't answer or stop to look at it.

I looked for more hands in the later paintings upstairs but there was little visible contact after antiquity, other than the sacred touch bookending the life of one man: mother and child and when that child is later led to his death.

No one embraced or comforted each other's emotional anguish as Socrates reached for the hemlock in The Death of Socrates. Only his childhood friend Crito clutched Soc's knee as he listened to his final words.

The son of Achilles appeared astonished so much that he needed to reach for his tutor's arm in Andromache and Astyanax because the grieving widow, forced to be his new wife, ignored him.



In Broken Eggs, an elder angrily clutched the hands of a young man responsible for taking a servant's virginity who sat next to a basket of broken eggs.

The hands of a man and woman barely touched as she half-heartedly pushed away his desperate advances in The Garter.

The mother and adoptive father of the one man with the acceptable sacred touch, held hands during their wedding ceremony in The Marraige of the Virgin.

The chemist who discovered the shape of water supported his learning wife and collaborator who draped her hand over his shoulder in Antoine Laurent Lavoisier and Marie Anne Lavoisier.

A woman surrendered her body in The Death of Harmonia to the aggressive hands of soldiers sent to kill her after they accidentally murdered a decoy forced into her clothes.

Of the hundreds of figures in The Triumph of Aemilius Paulus, only three received the touch of another and they are all children or mothers.

I walked through the main hall towards the exit to go play songs with my Beatle-loving friends in a basement. Everyone near the entrance was scrolling through restaurant reviews on their phones. I was still full from a cheeseburger, fries, and chocolate ice cream in a diner while I read a book before all the hands.

"Nothing is ever over. Everything can always begin again." --Chantal Akerman, My Mother Laughs